

DHA Has a Lott of Nerve

By Robert Wilonsky

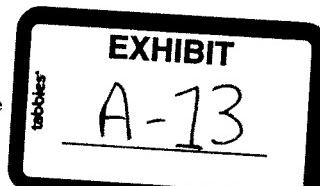
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The Dallas Morning News is reporting that more than 300 people showed up to a Dallas Housing Authority meeting today to protest the firing of agency president and CEO Ann Lott. The story says they were stunned to discover that housing commission chairman Guy Brignon and the board had already voted -- almost two months ago -- not to renew Lott's contract, which runs out in March. Suffice it to say, this is a surprising development. But, perhaps, Unfair Park knows what brought it about.

Lott, who has been running DHA for the last five years and has been with the agency for more than 20 years, is actually a beloved figure among the city's low-income families who she's been helping to shelter for years. Local folks involved in housing the city's poor say Lott has been doing a fantastic job; *DMN* columnist James Ragland nominated her Texan of the Year last December for her work in helping Katrina evacuees find temporary housing in Dallas. And she was featured extensively in our story about the revitalization of Frazier Courts in South Dallas, near Fair Park, where she hoped to recreate the success she had with the housing projects in West Dallas.



Ann Lott, the head of the Dallas Housing Authority...for now



In August, she told the *Observer* about the court-ordered West Dallas makeover, for which DHA used some \$200 million in U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development grants and other loans. "There were a lot of people who would tell us to our face, even people on my staff who would say, 'Why will anyone spend \$140,000 to live in West Dallas next to public housing?'" Lott said. "They would say, 'They can live anywhere in the city, why would they live there?' The answer is, some of them were raised there, went to church there and had a social conscience and wanted to be part of the process. They were never given the opportunity because there were never quality homes. It's as simple as that."

Among her biggest champions she counted Trammell Crow's chairman emeritus J. McDonald Williams and Boston-based urban planner Antonio DiMambro.

But some housing insiders are speculating she's being pushed out because she has fought efforts to sell Little Mexico Village, one of the oldest public-housing projects in the city. Little Mexico, which is just north of downtown on Harry Hines, is now prime real estate and could be worth as much as \$40 million, which is why some city government officials want to sell it.

Unfair Park learned this afternoon that Lott has had mixed feelings about the proposed sale of Little Mexico. On the one hand, she recognizes that the money from its sale would be beneficial for the city and DHA, which would likely pocket some of the proceeds. Then again, say sources close to Lott, Lott just doesn't want to part with it, because it's one of DHA's gems.

The Dallas Housing Authority has already voted to replace Lott; this morning's meeting was to vote on Lott's replacement. But so many people showed up to speak in Lott's behalf that the board delayed the vote, which means Lott's future at DHA is still up in the air. There also might be a legal issue here: The board decided to replace Lott during a closed-door session, without first announcing its intentions.

Lott tells friends running DHA is more than a job, it's a mission, and it's one she'd rather not give up. She has many friends and supporters who more than agree with her. --Jesse Hyde

Showing 2 comments



cactusflinthead 5 years ago

Fight the power girlfriend.
good luck.



Michael Davis-Dallas Progress 5 years ago

I knew that this Little Mexico would be an issue one day:

3/16/12

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<http://dallasprogress.blogspot...>

If she gets forced out because she fought this sale, it would be a power move plain and simple.

